

The MCA Advisory

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September Issue

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Medal Collectors of America

...was founded in 1998 as a club dedicated to the study and collection of artistic and historical medals. Our goal is to encourage research and publication in the medallic field, while bringing together all who are interested, through meetings, publication and other activities. Our print magazine, *The MCA Advisory* is now published quarterly and we encourage submissions from both newcomers and experienced researchers. It is also published electronically. We maintain an exceptional website at www.medalcollectors.org, and encourage everyone to visit the site to learn more about the organization. We

Notes on this month's cover

Rare 1820 Mass. Charitable Mechanics Association award medal

hold two meetings a year featuring guest speakers on a wide range of topics relating to medal collecting. One is held in August in conjunction with the American Numismatic Association convention, and the second in January, in conjunction with the New York International Numismatic convention. Meetings are open to all. One of the greatest benefits to membership is the opportunity to acquire our annual medal which is struck in very limited quantities and available only to members.

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Introduction by the Editor

In the last issue of *The Advisory*, I wrote a small article on the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics Association medal, speculating that any medals awarded prior to 1837, were likely to have been engraved rather than struck. That brought a quick response from John Sallay who once owned a medal struck and awarded by that society as early as 1820. Fortunately, John was able to send in photos, and I was so taken with the "revelation" of this medal's existence that I decided to use John's images on the cover of this issue. In our "Letters" section, he has described the medal as being between two and a half to three inches in diameter and about seven to nine millimeters thick. This leads me to wonder what machinery could have existed in America in private hands in 1820, that would have been powerful enough to strike such a massive medal? Or, is it possible they were made at the U.S. Mint? The medal clearly looks American to me.

John also sent in a thoughtful letter on Rob Rodriguez and Tony Lopez's article about the Continental Dollar, with speculation that they might not have been to work of Elisha Gallaudet.

We also have a remarkable submission from Dr. Angel Navarro about a medal that was proposed for the Spanish loyalist survivors of Cartagena de Indias' battle for independence, that might or might not have ever been struck.

Our good friend Lev Tsitrin has submitted another of his mind pieces, this time on the medal of Erasmus by Quentin Metsys. I find Lev's mental machinations as he works through a medallic conundrum to be endlessly fascinating.

Ira Rezak has treated us to another glimpse of his remarkable collection of medals, this time with an interesting biography of American medallist Theodore Spicer-Simson, whose career began at the turn of the twentieth-century, spanned two world

wars and carried on into the early 1950s. He had the opportunity to sculpt some of the most well known and important figures of his age.

Chris McDowell's article on the East Indies lead seals, Betts 112, has inspired several contributions. The first comes from our friend Chester Sullivan on the "East India company insofar as it relates to John Law's machinations with the East India Company's embers, and his New Orleans Banque Royale." We have also received a very interesting study on the Louisiana coat of arms as used on these seals, from Steve Kling.

Rob Rodriguez and Tony Lopez, as part of their ongoing study of Continental Dollars have submitted a census of the rare 1783 Treaty of Paris medal, Betts 614, that incorporated a reverse very similar to that used on the Continental dollar. Their article is complete with photographs of all known examples, including edge photos. This will no doubt spark a lot of interest.

The issue is rounded out with a submission from Jeff Shevlin on the recent addition of certain Centennial medals to the *Mega Red Book* in the "So-Called Dollar" category. While I am not really a fan of the category, as inclusion or exclusion seems to be arbitrary and the material does not seem to be arranged by any formula or logic that I can perceive, I love many of these medals and despite my reservations, the category does seem to have caught on with collectors.

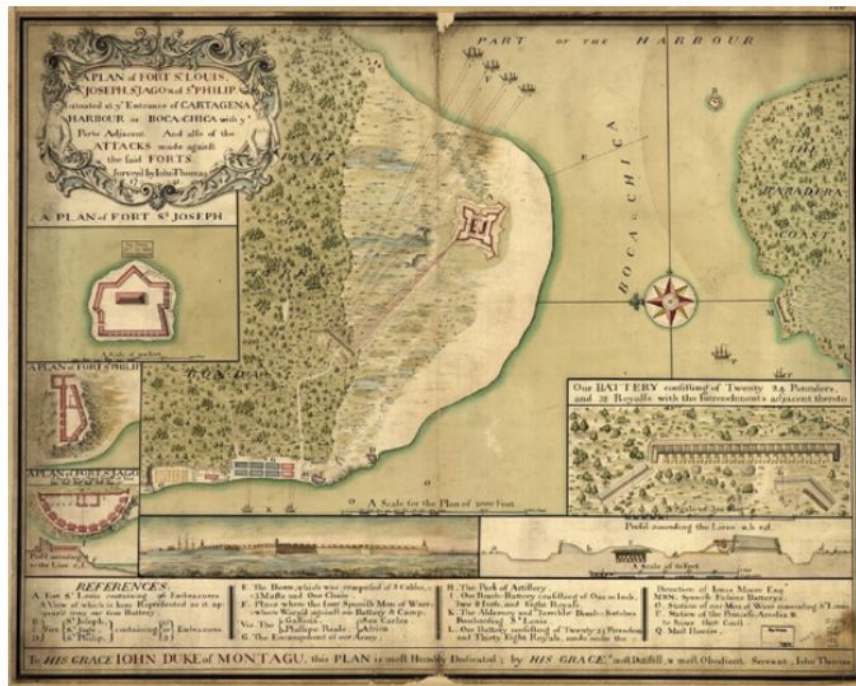
Finally, Steve Scher has sent in a brief introduction to his work on Heraldry with a link to his complete study on the subject. The study relates in general to Renaissance art and more specifically to the medals in his magnificent collection now at the Frick Museum. I encourage everyone to visit this site and to buy his beautifully produced book.

Please enjoy

Neil

Design of a medal for merits contracted in Cartagena de Indias (1813-1815)

by
Dr. Ángel O. Navarro Zayas



A plan of Fort St. Louis, St. Joseph, St. Jago & of St. Philip scituated at ye entrance of Cartagena Harbour or Boca-Chica with ye parts adjacent and also of the attacks made against the said forts!

The history of the Spanish Colonial city of Cartagena de Indias, began on June 1, 1533 when it was founded by Pedro Heredia. Cartagena de Indias. The city became very prosperous due to the export of gold, emeralds and other things of abundant wealth. It was also a commercial port for ships that were traveling from Peru to Cuba and then on to Spain. Unfortunately, in 1552 a massive fire reduced the city to ashes, after which Heredia prohibited the construction of any buildings with any materials other than brick, tile, stone or rock.

The City's prosperity attracted the interest of the pirates. The first attacks were by conducted by the Frenchman Roberto Baal and over the course of the next few years, Cartagena de Indias experienced countless numbers of attacks at the hands of the English, including John Hawkins, the brothers Juan and Martín Côté, and Sir Francis Drake "The Sea-

Dragon." As a result, a wall and fortifications were built, and Cartagena became one of the most protected cities in South America. The Spanish conceived their forts, batteries and castles through the ingenuity of their architects and with the help of the Italians. The work was done by African slaves brought to the "New World"³ for this purpose.

The Independence of Cartagena de Indias

To the continent of South America, Cartagena de Indias was second in importance only to the city of Caracas, Venezuela. Events of great importance were carried out and undertaken to free the city from servitude to Spain, and it declared its independence on November 11, 1811. Because of this decision, Cartagena was forced to face off against the Spanish empire.

This period of War for Independence lasted almost 10 years during which there were victories and defeats, but eventually Cartagena established control



The walled city of Cartagena de Indias ²

over its own destiny and creating a basis for its own independent evolution. It was during this time that Simón Bolívar – “El Libertador” (The Liberator) rose to greatness. To this day he continues to be one of the most important historical figures in Colombia.

It was also during this period that the medal, which is the subject of this research paper, was designed for Loyalist supporters of the Spanish King of Spain Fernando 7.

While using the catalog of the *General Archive of the Indies* in Seville, Spain, I came across the description of what seemed to be a medal design from Santa Marta 1813–1815. It caught my attention and led me to send an inquiry to the staff at the archive. About a year later I was able to obtain copies of the documents described in the catalog including a drawing of the medal design.

It is a known fact that medals and awards have had their origin in the need for different civilizations to honor achievement or give distinction to individuals for their actions. They are generally metallic pieces, hence the name which comes from the Italian, *medaglia*,⁴ which in turn derives from the latin, *medalia*; medals are usually of manipulable dimensions and of diverse ornamental shapes.

One of the difficulties encountered when trying to reconstruct the history behind the Cartagena de Indias (1813-1815) medal design, was that the ink used in the original manuscripts has faded to the point where it became extremely difficult to transcribe. There were only 6 pages accompanying the medal design

(they were most likely the folder that accompanied the file when it was sent to Spain early in the 19th Century) and only variously dispersed paragraphs on those 6 pages were still legible. I have been able to transcribe and subsequently translate parts of the hand written manuscript as follows:

Represents your grace his services, emigration and captivity in chains of twenty-nine months in the Plaza de Cartagena in consideration of which he is allowed to use in case his [sic] distinctive design accompanies.⁵

Sir

[DOCUMENT LOST INK—ILLEGIBLE]

An invention that is a true work of the delicacy of his feelings for the Royal cause of Your Grace, and that can be extended to others who have suffered like him, if it were to the Royal liking of Your Grace. Santa Marta, December 7, 1815.

Lázaro de Robles

Sir

Due to public notoriety, it is constant that this officer had the unfortunate luck of having been imprisoned in the City of Cartagena when it was dominated by traitors to Your Grace. In this destiny, all the good vassals decided for your just cause suffered infinite humiliations. In its consequence and in that of the personal knowledge that I have of the good conduct of this officer, I do not find embarrassment in supporting his representation so that V.M determines as your Royal clemency inspires him. Cartagena de Indias. December 19, 1815.

[FALTA INCLUIR FIRMA] (*lacking signature*) ed.

Being a prisoner of these in the withdrawal that made the entire Magdalena line, and confined to a pontoon with chain and shackle used at the same

time in the public works of cleaning the streets and mud from the quay of that City for the space of twenty-nine months passing the greatest samples, humiliations, raffles of life, for not wanting to access the seductions of several officers who went from his body to separate him from the thoughts of honor and loyalty to Your Grace, Well, it was in vain how many advantages they offered to extract it from their detestable system [sic] that by not following it previously, they abandoned their commanded bodies and children, leaving them in

[DOCUMENT LOST INK - ILLEGIBLE]

the feet of the Throne asking for Justice, but it is also allowed to implore grace, be it Lord, the one that Your Grace **an award medal** for his captivity grants him if it is to his Sovereign pleasure, and with concept to the Royal Order of November 6, 1814, that Your Grace granted the prisoners in France the badge that she indicates, that of being able to use for themselves and their children (as long as they do not know their way of thinking and true feelings of honor) **a distinctive badge equal to the design that I accompany** with which is public in these domains their constancy [**Constancia**] in defending the rights of the Throne and the

[DOCUMENT LOST INK—ILLEGIBLE]

SEE TABLE BELOW

[DOCUMENT LOST INK - ILLEGIBLE]

so grade of Infantry and Senior Assitant added to the Provisional Battalion of the Line of this Plaza and in charge of the detail of the same Corps of which Captain Don Lázaro de Robles is accidental commander = I certify that the previous sheet of services has been formed by the original party of interest that he took from Cartagena and other supporting documents that he has presented for this purpose = Santa Marta, December 2, one thousand eight hundred and fifteen = As in charge of the Detail = José María Merlano = Yours = Lázaro de Robles.

Don José María Merlano Infantry Grade Captain and Senior Assistant attached to the Provisional Battalion of this Plaza and in charge of the Detail of the same body of which Captain Don Lázaro de Robles is accidental Commander.

I certify that the previous sheet of services is a copy of the original that exists in the Archive of my position giving this order from the Deputy Inspector General of these Troops dated November 28 last. Santa Marta December 3, 1815.

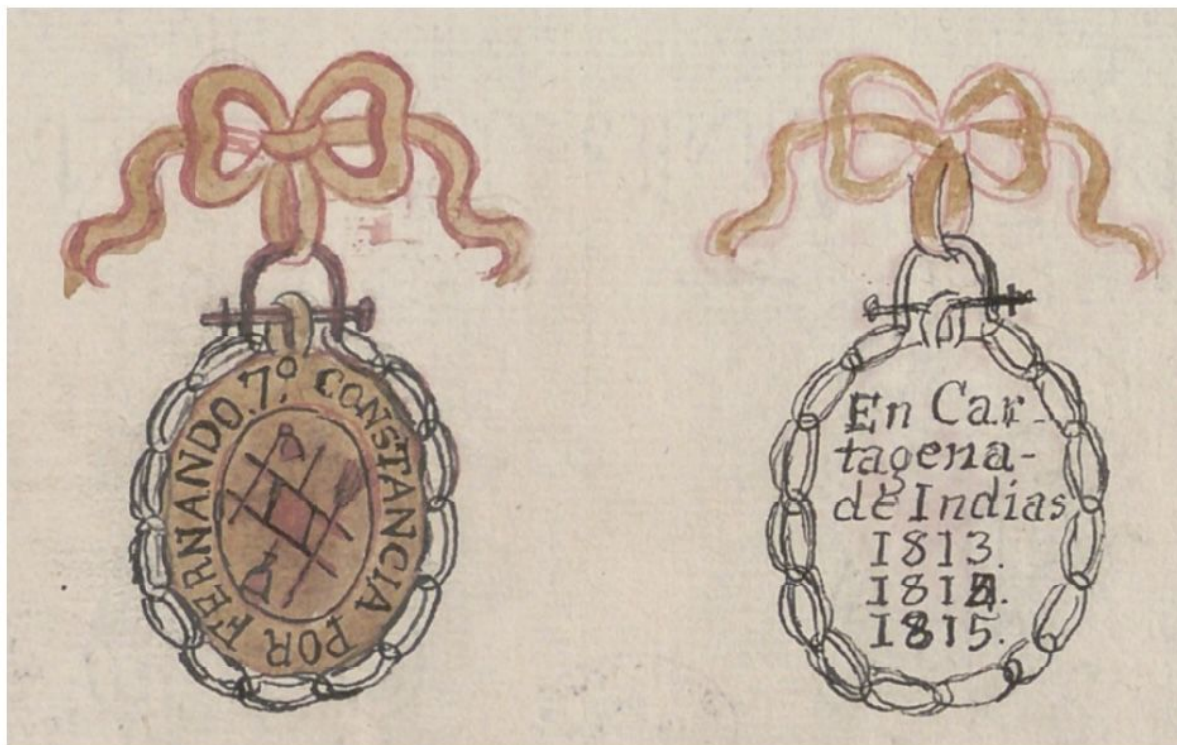
As in charge of this Detail.

Lázaro de Robles Josef María Merlano

Conclusion

The history behind the medal design has been hampered by the lack of primary sources due to in part to the inclemency of time upon the ink of the

Provisional Battalion of the Line of this Plaza							
The Assistant Don Francisco Alonso Morán, his age 32, his country Castilla la Vieja, his noble quality, his good health, his services and circumstances which he expresses.							
The time when jobs began				The time that has been used and how much in each one			
Employment	Days	Months	Years	Employment	Years	Months	Days
Distinguished Soldier and Corporal	2	October	1793	Of soldier and distinguished corporal	4	4	16
2nd sergeant	18	February	1798	2nd sergeant	“	10	10
Cadet	28	December	1798	Cadet	5	8	2
Second Lieutenant by order of His Excellency the Viceroy of the Kingdom	30	August	1804	Second lieutenant	1	4	13
Second Lieutenant of the Royal Office	14	January	1806	Second lieutenant of grenades	3	11	27
2nd assistant	10	January	1810	2nd assistant	5	3	2
Lieutenant	12	April	1815	Lieutenant	“	7	18
Total until the end of November 1815					22	1	28
Regiments where they have served							



hand written manuscripts. Nevertheless, as we could clearly read the medals were to be awarded to the Loyalist militaries for their constancy: "...a distinctive badge equal to the design that I accompany with which is public in these domains their constancy [Constancia] in defending the rights of the Throne..." We have been unable to locate any metallic medal of this sort, yet we hope that someday it might surface so it can be further studied and evaluated.

Acknowledgments

A debt of gratitude goes to Dr. Damaris Mercado, the first female president of the Puerto Rican Numismatic Society, for her support on my research. To the Eric P. Newman Education Society (EPNNE), Mr. Andy Newman, Mr. Leonard Augsburg, and Mr. Christopher McDowell, thank you for believing in my research. To my parents Dr. Nelson Navarro Ramas and Flor Zayas Yordán, for your everlasting support and unconditional love. To my beautiful, caring and loving wife, Pilar Cristina: thank you for being the solid Christian Pillar of our home; and last but not least, my two young sons, Lucas Mateo and Matías Manuel, you boys make us proud, I hope that someday you enjoy history and numismatics as much as Papá.

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